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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Measures taken following the cyclones and floods that have affected Madagascar

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/36 of 29 July 1994, adopted following the consideration of the initial report of the Secretary-General relating to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/234 of 14 February 1994, on emergency assistance to Madagascar.[1] In that resolution, appeals were made to the international community to assist the Government of Madagascar in its efforts to repair the damage caused by floods and cyclones in that country.

2. By resolution 1994/36, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to evaluate further, with the participation of the organizations of the United Nations system, the damage caused by the cyclones and floods that had struck Madagascar and the medium-term and long-term impact of those disasters on the national economy and to compile information that could promote concerted international assistance. It also requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to assist the Government in preparing a reconstruction and rehabilitation programme in the affected regions and sectors. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/50/292-E/1995/115) provided a summary of measures taken in those respects. The General Assembly, by resolution 50/58 I of 20 December 1995, urged that efforts be continued in that regard, and requested the Secretary-General to report on progress made.

3. Since 1994, Madagascar has been further devastated by natural disasters, notably cyclones, and the international community has assisted the Government in its efforts to provide appropriate relief and to effect vital reconstruction. The present report provides a summary of the action taken or currently under way, and highlights some of the continuing challenges.

II. Activities undertaken

A. Relief measures taken following cyclones, floods and locust infestations in Madagascar since 1994

4. Since 1994, generous support has been forthcoming from the international community to assist the Government of Madagascar in its efforts to alleviate the damage caused

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by cyclones, floods and locust infestations. The Government of Japan made a grant of US$ 2.667 million for the purchase of rice in 1995 in aid of victims of the various disasters and as a contribution to greater national food security. The European Development Fund contributed US$ 1.27 million for the purchase of food for the benefit of victims of cyclones and other disasters. Switzerland contributed US$ 734,000, through Caritas, for the local purchase and free distribution of food to victims in the temporary reception and welfare centres and in the population at large.

5. In response to a situation report prepared by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and its appeal for emergency assistance immediately after cyclones Daisy and Geralda in 1994, donors provided US$ 10.556 million in cash and kind to the Government of Madagascar. Bilateral donors who have notified the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of contributions include Australia, Austria, Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Japan, Luxembourg, Federated States of Micronesia, Norway, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Assistance has also been forthcoming from the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP). In addition, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs made an emergency grant of US$ 30,000.

6. Several non-governmental organizations have contributed to assistance efforts. These included the Red Cross societies of Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, which generally contribute through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), as well as Caritas Germany.

7. In response to cyclone Bonita of March 1996, which inflicted major damage on the central parts of the east coast, contributions notified by donors to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in response to its appeal, totalled US$ 445,462, provided principally by France, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Commission. The additional emergency grant by the Department of US$ 30,000 was used to finance the Centre de récupération nutritionelle intensive at Foulpointe, a nutritional rehabilitation facility for cyclone victims.

8. Cyclone Gretelle of January 1997 likewise elicited a positive response in cash and kind, through a combination of bilateral and multilateral channels, from Austria, China, Denmark, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Nippon Foundation and IFRC. The value of contributions notified to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was US$ 880,168. In addition, UNDP Madagascar also provided US$ 200,000 in support of the relief effort. Several multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations, notably Adventist Development and Relief Agency, CARE International, Médécins sans frontières (France), Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, Médécins du monde, Sécouristes sans frontières and Hélimission, made significant contributions.

9. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany and UNDP generously assisted Madagascar to contain the recent locust emergency of May 1997, through the provision of appropriate technical assistance and equipment valued at US$ 276,215.

B. Measures aimed at strengthening Madagascar's disaster management capacity

Technical support by the United Nations system

10. In 1994, FAO made a technical cooperation grant of US$ 48,000 to Madagascar for the purpose of jointly evaluating with WFP the damage caused to food production by cyclones Daisy and Geralda. The evaluation sought, in particular, to identify the action to be taken for the urgent rehabilitation of the devastated areas.

11. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has reported that, as a member of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Madagascar participated in a project, entitled "Regional meteorological cooperation project on tropical cyclones for the south-west Indian Ocean region", together with Comoros, Mauritius, La Réunion (France) and Seychelles. The project was formulated with the assistance of WMO, with the main objective of upgrading the tropical cyclone forecasting capabilities of IOC member countries. It was implemented between 1993 and 1996 with funds obtained under a loan from the European Development Fund by IOC countries. Under the project, Madagascar received meteorological equipment, such as weather observation stations, a primary data user system, a high-resolution picture transmission system, a hydrogen electrolyzer, a

transmitter, and several other items of equipment at a total cost of approximately 1,745,000 European currency units.

12. In January 1997, Madagascar requested assistance from WMO to replace meteorological equipment destroyed by tropical cyclone Gretelle. In response to that request, the Government of China agreed to provide Madagascar with the equipment for one weather observation station under the WMO voluntary cooperation programme

13. After the events of 1994, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to provide technical advice in pre-disaster planning through technical consultancies. Modest but appropriate material aid was also provided. Those contributions have been described in previous reports to the General Assembly.

14. In the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs financed the participation of delegates from Madagascar in a workshop on natural disaster reduction in Burkina Faso in May 1995. During the workshop, representatives from Madagascar were briefed on disaster reduction management in general. In addition, the Department's Disaster Management Training Programme organized two workshops in Madagascar, a national exercise from 3 to 7 June 1996, and a regional workshop from 10 to 12 June 1996. Both events were organized in collaboration with the Government and IOC and benefited from the participation of 40 high-level governmental officials, as well as representatives of United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations, and donors.

15. The national workshop for Madagascar resulted in the definition of priority guidelines for action plans, aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities for preparing for and coping with the impact of disasters. Special attention was given to strengthening national capacity and reconstruction following the natural disasters of 1994 and cyclone Bonita in 1996. As follow-up to the workshop in Madagascar, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and UNDP have set up a committee which has the task of monitoring the implementation of recommendations elaborated by the workshop participants.

16. The results of the national workshop have served as a basis for:

(a) The creation of a team spirit and sustained commitment to natural disaster reduction management;

(b) The identification of the beneficial links between disaster reduction and sustainable development planning and practice;

(c) The enumeration of the critical measures and resources required to strengthen Madagascar's capacity for the efficient management of disasters, including during the relief phase;

(d) Initiating the process of the systematic development of a comprehensive national plan of action for disaster reduction management.

17. In close cooperation with the UNDP Office in Madagascar, an appraisal and planning mission will be sent by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to Madagascar towards the end of 1997 to work with the authorities and the other national partners on the above-mentioned issues. The priority task of the mission is to assist the Government of Madagascar in defining its comprehensive national policy and strategy for disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. This should subsequently be developed into appropriate action disaster reduction programmes by a team of local and international experts, in collaboration with the Government, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the vulnerable communities. On this basis, the Department, UNDP and other United Nations system partners will continue their search for funding to permit programme implementation.

Financial and other material support from donors

18. The International Development Authority (IDA) had made a loan valued at US$ 13.1 million to enhance Madagascar's disaster preparedness capacity. Disbursements from those funds in 1995, amounting to US$ 2.78 million, were used to finance reconstruction efforts following cyclones Daisy and Geralda. Also in 1995, from another IDA loan, the Government disbursed US$ 3.51 million to strengthen food security and implement an expanded nutritional programme. The World Food Programme also made a significant contribution to strengthen Madagascar's food security in the event of sudden onset events, such as cyclones and floods, or slow-onset drought which is a recurrent feature in parts of the country.

19. Some US$ 2.955 million was disbursed in 1995, *inter alia*, to augment the revenues of the poorest and most vulnerable households in urban areas and to reduce the very high levels of malnutrition among children under five years of age. The Government of France also made a loan of US$ 683,000, of which US$ 206,000 was disbursed in 1995 for strengthening institutional preparedness in case of disaster.

20. In response to the damage caused by cyclone Cynthia, the Government of Switzerland made a grant of US$ 3.954 million for the upgrading of secondary and tertiary channels of the Dabara Morondava Canal. This programme, in which the Ministry of Agriculture is the designated executing agency, will operate on the basis of a food-for-work scheme.

C. Continuing challenges

21. Several initiatives, reflected in the previous report to the Assembly, have yet to be realized. Substantial external financial support is required to support the national fund for natural disasters, comprising funds for the reconstruction and maintenance of highway infrastructure, public buildings and the development of fuel buffer stocks. Similarly, the rehabilitation of cultivated areas and development of cultivable land areas require systematic and sustained attention. The development of a reliable system for monitoring and early warning of the level of staple and other food stocks takes on an added urgency owing to the likely impact on Madagascar of the current El Niño phenomenon.

III. Concluding observations

22. In addition to cyclones and the resulting floods, Madagascar is vulnerable to natural hazards, including pest infestation, bush fires, seismic activity, landslides and recurrent drought. While the response of the international community to relief needs in the aftermath of disaster events has been consistently good, assistance with vital rehabilitation and durable reconstruction efforts has not been of the desired level. Yet, investment in a comprehensive national disaster reduction management strategy, plan and programme which encompass pre-disaster mitigation and durable post-disaster reconstruction is an investment in sound environmental management and balanced, durable development.

23. Concerned entities of the United Nations system will, therefore, continue to mobilize the international community to substantively address the outstanding issues that would enhance Madagascar's capacity to manage, at the various stages, the effects of recurrent natural disasters. The forthcoming appraisal and planning mission will lay the foundations of comprehensive, multi-sectoral disaster reduction management, drawing upon international and local expertise. The various bilateral and multilateral development partners of Madagascar will then have an opportunity to assist the Government in the realization of its natural disaster reduction management strategy for all hazards.

Notes

[1] E/1994/66